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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kankakee Police Department to Host Citizens Police Academies

Kankakee, IL – The Kankakee Police Department has scheduled police academies for residents. The academies provide an opportunity for residents to build relationships with officers, learn the functions of the department and gain an understanding of local police work in their community. The Citizens Police Academies consists of classes that will last 8 weeks, meeting once a week.

For several years, Deputy Chief Hunt has taught in the academies at Kankakee High School and Kankakee Community College. Deputy Chief Hunt stated, "I believe the academies have a long-lasting impact not just on the community, but also on those who might later be interested in a career with the police department. Having served as a school resource officer for 20 years, I was often the first contact youth had with their local law enforcement. During my first teen academy class, I actually worked with a student named Erik Villagomez and he is now a Kankakee police officer."

"The program provided first-hand experience with the local police department and introduced me to many laws. I met a lot of officers who were willing to volunteer their time in talking about being an officer. The program had influence in molding me into the officer I am today," said Officer Erik Villagomez.

Paving the way to build a safer community by bridging the gap between residents and the local police aligns with Mayor Wells-Armstrong's *Kankakee Forward* agenda.

"Effectively addressing crime requires a partnership between the community and the police department. Many residents have found the academies beneficial to understanding the criminal justice system. Additionally, residents have reported increased empathy for some of the situations our officers face when they come to work every day. To improve the safety of our community, we must work together," said Mayor Wells-Armstrong.

The Citizens Police Academy will begin on September 26, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. in the Public Safety Building. The Kankakee Police Department is also offering a Hispanic Citizens Police Academy for spanish-speaking residents which will start at 7:00 p.m. following the first session. The classes are free and open to the public. Advanced registration is not required to attend.

The goal of the academies is to produce graduates who are ready to share their knowledge and implement strategies to build safer neighborhoods. Graduates are then encouraged to join the Citizens Police Academy Alumni Association. The association provides additional opportunities for continued education in law enforcement, as well as, networking opportunities to build relationships within the department.

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The City of Kankakee is dedicated to protecting, building and nurturing the community while enhancing lives. We are a historic, vibrant, and active riverfront community. We continue to transform into an extraordinary place to dream, grow, and thrive. Embracing our diversity, we strive to be progressive, inclusive, and innovative. For more information on the City of Kankakee, please visit the website at www.citykankakee-il.gov.